



"The emancipation of the working class will only be achieved by the working class itself" (Karl Marx)

THE "CLASSLESS" SOCIAL PEACE OF QE2'S REIGN SHOULD BE BURIED WITH HER!

The suspension of strike action within minutes of the notice of the queen's demise reveals exactly the true function of the British monarchy. Bringing the "nation" together, unity of all! Concealing the deep class divide between poor and rich, working class and exploiting class - that same class which refuses absolutely to pay workers a living wage today!

The optical illusion created by a media-savvy "classless matriarchy", er... sorry, "monarchy" - aided by incredible (and incredibly expensive!) show-business - is precisely what the British capitalist state has relied upon these past 70 years to help it keep social peace.

And as we hear from the endless messages of condolence from politicians of every stripe, it makes no difference which party has sat in government. They have all upheld - and continue to uphold - this gold and diamond-encrusted system, equally! And to display their loyalty and obedience, every MP wore black when attending the House of Commons the day after the royal death.

The monarchy isn't neutral

Of course, contrary to the wall-to-wall commentary about her, the queen was never a "neutral figure", nor even "above it all". Silence over her own opinions was always the silence of consent.

In truth this most bourgeois of queens - an extremely rich capitalist in her own right, who nevertheless got a "sovereign grant" of £102.4 million from "her people" - would have found little fault with any of the prime ministers who kissed (or shook) her hand. Not even Boris Johnson and Liz Truss, the last 2 to do so.

By saying nothing, Mrs Windsor was always saying "yes" to the perpetuation of the class system which British capitalism rests upon. And moreover, to British imperialism and its domination over the



so-called "Commonwealth" ("her great love"!); wealth which is sucked out of former dominions into British hands. Nothing "common" about it! But this is precisely why it is so vital to the ruling class to keep the monarchy alive, even if this would be an excellent moment to get rid of it for good!

So there was no pause. "The queen is dead, long live the king". Charles 3rd shifted straight into her place. And as he said in advance, he understands that he'll now have to keep his dotty opinions to himself... Silence means consent.

The throne must be overthrown!

Quite a few railway and postal workers were saddened on Thursday the 8th, not by the death of the queen as much as by the cancellation of their strike days! Rail union members received immediate messages reading: the "RMT joins the whole nation in paying its respects to Queen Elizabeth. The planned railway strike action on 15 and 17 September is suspended... We express our deepest condolences..."

Precisely! And well done! The class struggle just got suspended in mid-air in favour of national (class!) unity, by the same union leader who just 2 months ago announced that the "working class" was "back"! Actually, this shouldn't have come as a surprise. After all, union leaders are not "revolutionaries"!

Instead of staying on strike and demonstrating to the other classes how they can do nothing without us, workers are expected to observe 10 days of mourning, culminating in the most expensive funeral procession the world has ever seen! And all paid for by those "hard-working families" which politicians are so fond of mentioning. Families who today cannot afford to pay their bills, even after PM Truss intervened to limit energy costs to a maximum of... £2,500!

All that said, however, the working class WILL be back. There's no other choice but to continue fighting. Ultimately though, the struggle has to go much further. The whole rotten, top-heavy, class system needs overthrowing. Because enough is too much. ☐

Russia/Ukraine

The 24th August, which happened to be Ukraine's "independence day", marked 6 months since the invasion by Russia's army; 6 months of a ruthless, destructive war of attrition. A war which the Ukrainian regime under Zelensky, has resolved to carry out to the bitter end - to "victory".

Johnson's last stand

This was the day disgraced-at-home but still caretaker prime minister, Boris Johnson chose to arrive in Kiev to see his best mate Zelensky and get his ego stroked. After all, claiming to be first among western leaders to proclaim his support for Ukraine against Putin, is said by his fans to be one of his "great achievements". And for sure, in Ukraine he is unlikely to get booed.

Posing for cameras, he promised another £54m in military aid. Not of course anything close to the \$3.5bn just announced by the US. And so the leading Nato governments carry on fuelling, without any let-up, this proxy war against Putin's army for which the Ukrainian and Russian populations must pay the price.

Big business and nuclear threats

While this war is big business for the global arms companies it has other repercussions, not least because of the key role of Russian oil on the world economy and in particular, because of Gazprom's Nordstream pipeline which has been providing 40% of Europe's energy needs. At the time of writing it is unclear whether this supply, which is currently halted, has been "weaponised" by Russia's leaders, as a means to get the West to lift sanctions against the country. But it provides an obvious scapegoat, given the current global energy crisis, especially for new PM Truss, who has already blamed Britain's energy crisis on "Putin's war" despite the fact that Russian gas indirectly comprises at most, 4% of Britain's supply.

In the last weeks, attention has been focused on the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant which has been occupied by the Russian military who are apparently using it as a base, while Ukrainian personnel are still

Six months of war; no end in sight?



operating it. In fact inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency who remain inside the plant have said there is no current threat of a nuclear explosion, but refuse to say which side shelled the facility, thus posing this threat.

The real cost of this war

That some kind of accord between Russia and Ukraine could be reached is evidenced by the fact that 86 shipments (so far) of Ukrainian grain have left the Russian-occupied ports of Odesa, Chornomorsk and Pivdenny for poor countries in desperate need, after a deal brokered between Russia, Ukraine and Turkey.

However as far as the "progress" of this war is concerned, it is impossible to know exactly what is really happening on the ground; Russian generals claim they are advancing, while Zelensky claims his forces are "winning".

It is also impossible to assess the losses or gains on each side due to the one-sided reporting for audiences on the "Ukrainian side". The website "Grid" quotes a US security expert who in turn quotes the 19th century Prussian military theorist Carl von Clausewitz, who said, "Casualty reports on either side are never accurate, seldom truthful, and in most cases deliberately falsified". The Kremlin's official public assessment of Russian military losses still stand at 1,351. NATO estimates 7-15,000. The Ukrainians say there are 43,000 Russian dead. This is a huge difference.

NHS. The Office for National Statistics reported excess deaths through the roof last month. In England and Wales during the week to August 19, these were 18.6% above average for this time of the year (1,719 excess deaths in just one week!). And this is before children go back to school and the virus-loaded months of Autumn and Winter even start.

But while all experts have warned that the coming NHS winter crisis will be one of the worst on record, the only government strategy is to recommend Covid booster vaccines. The fallout is

The Ukrainians report 40,000 Ukrainian civilians have been killed or wounded since the war began. The United Nations' latest estimate of civilians killed is more than 5,500, but how many are injured? There is no figure to rely upon. As for Ukrainian soldiers killed, US Intelligence said it's anything between 5,500 to 11,000. In June there was a report that Ukraine was losing 200 soldiers a day.

What can be counted more accurately is the number of refugees who have fled the county and this is as many as 6.6m. There are probably as many who are internally displaced.

And the interests of the population?

Today, what is called "the fog of this war" but in reality, the vested interest on each side, obscures the truth of its unbearable cost to the populations on both sides. That an end to this war is urgent and necessary is obvious.

However the latest statement from Zelensky, still sporting the green military tee-shirt he has worn since day 1, is that the West should continue to supply him with arms so that he can win. And he adds that the current energy crisis in Europe, caused by Putin's blackmail over Nordstream1, "is a price worth paying" - and never mind the real price: the unbearable cost in life and limb and destruction for the Ukrainian and Russian population! ☐

that boosters have uncertain efficiency against the Omicron variants. But even so, Moderna and Pfizer/BioNTech are now fighting for the profits they intend to make (worth £44bn of Covid vaccine sales this year!) in a lawsuit over the intellectual property of mRNA vaccine technology...

Of course, the government is far more interested in big pharmaceutical companies making super-profits, rather than providing the funds for routine treatment and above all, the staff (130,000 vacancies remain unfilled) which the NHS so urgently needs!

Covid continues while the NHS is starved to death

Despite the glossy picture of the Covid response still painted by Johnson's supporters, the reality is that Britain's pandemic record remains one of the worst in the world. It has had the 2nd highest death rate (302 deaths per 100,000) of the G7 countries, just behind the US. Another 1,447 people died in August alone.

Of course, what the pandemic exposed was the already-collapsed state of the

Their society

Not an energy crisis but blatant opportunist profiteering!

Liz Truss did not exactly implement an energy price freeze - the wording is an "energy price guarantee" which limits the price that suppliers can charge for a unit of gas, "meaning a typical household will pay no more than £2,500 a year for energy..."

But that is over £200 a month... And it's already unaffordable for many. Anyway, what is a typical household? And what about the card-meters in "multiple occupancy rentals"? Etc, etc...

What had raised anxiety levels to breaking point (and this government intervention is a function of that) was the regulator Ofgem's announcement of another rise in its price cap to £3,549 from October, even bigger than the 80% hike from £1,227 to £1,971 in April. It would have represented an increase of 289% across the year. And as Ofgem pointed out, only bills on a default tariff are capped, made up by the sum of its standing charge and the price per kilowatt/hour. Bills for high users rise higher! And so does the cost of electricity via a pay-as-you-go meter. Truss has, of course, also said that Sunak's £400 subsidy to every household is to be retained.

The impact on working-class households, struggling to make their too-low wages cover their bills as the cost of living has risen to a 40-year high, has turned Martin Lewis, TV's "money-saving expert", into a vociferous

campaigner on the side of the poor! He has called the situation "a catastrophe".

What's the reason for this "catastrophe"?

So why is Britain so badly affected? After all, energy supplies haven't collapsed. One reason given is that gas stocks across Europe and Asia were depleted during the cold 2020-21 winter, and Britain's Centrica - the main private beneficiary of gas privatisation - closed its major gas storage facility years ago - to save money... As for the war in Ukraine being blamed, hardly any of Britain's supply actually comes from Russia. That said, the sanctions invoked against it have limited overall supply, so other gas producers have taken advantage and upped their own prices to exorbitant levels - all thanks to the wonderful capitalist "free" market,

In fact gas prices were already hitting record levels last September. It was that surge that led to 31 smaller energy suppliers going bust. After the slump caused by pandemic lockdowns, the "end" of the pandemic saw a surge in demand and an immediate opportunistic price increase.

As for alternatives to fossil fuel energy generation, energy from "renewables" is sold on the same market. The same goes for nuclear energy even though for the moment it provides a small proportion of

supply.

It is obvious that the energy companies need not have increased their prices. They would have faced a revolt of their shareholders, of course. So instead they chose to throw millions of households into hardship.

The energy robber-barons

The biggest energy players, the oil giants, BP and Shell, have made record profits in the meantime: BP made nearly £7bn and Shell made nearly £10bn, in the April-June quarter alone. Shell plans to give shareholders £6.5bn.

As for Centrica, which owns British Gas, it made £1.34bn in the first half of 2022. This company owns stakes in generating companies (including nuclear and renewables) and has a trading arm selling gas and electricity to suppliers.

Proposing a polite "windfall tax" as Labour does or imposing a one-off levy as Sunak did while still Chancellor, is colluding with these robbers. It is utterly scandalous that they have got away with such naked racketeering and not only that, caused a crisis upon a crisis while doing so, sending the cost of living sky-high.

Energy generation and supply is so fundamental to society that it should never have been placed in the private sector in the first place. So it should be fully renationalised. ☐

Water companies: where there's muck, there's brass

Dozens of beaches around England were closed for bathing in late August after untreated sewage was discharged into the sea. It led to vocal public protest from local swimmers like "Surfers Against Sewage".

But water companies are allowed to release sewage into the environment when "exceptional" rainfall threatens to overwhelm treatment works. There were 403,171 such incidents recorded in 2020 from 15,000 registered overflows, a 37% rise on the previous year.

On 19 August, failing infrastructure due to zero investment in maintenance and renewal by these sewage profiteers(!) caused a leak into the River Ray near Swindon, killing over 1,000 fish.

Yet the water companies will only be required to introduce continuous monitoring of all overflows by the end of 2023!

As for removing the problem by disconnecting foul sewers from surface water drains, and building new capacity into sewerage systems, these "pirateers" make the minimum investments required by the regulator Ofwat in order to max out their profits...



Clean or filthy leaks, all the same!

Since the water companies of England and Wales were privatised in 1989, they've paid nearly £60bn in dividends to shareholders. But as was reported during the recent drought, they don't even stop supply-pipe leaks. During this year's drought - the worst since 1976 - it was revealed that 3 billion litres of water were wasted every day. In fact Thames Water said on its website that it leaks out 24% of the water it supplies!

It's clear that these companies

cannot be trusted to provide enough clean water (in a country which has ample natural supplies!), nor prevent dangerous contamination of the rivers and shores. The fines Ofwat occasionally hands out are nothing compared to the water companies' assured incomes, given they're selling a fundamental necessity of life. Southern Water, for instance, made a profit of £139 million AFTER a fine of £90 million for pumping raw sewage onto the beaches of the Isle of Wight.

They all need to be taken over.

The strike wave

• Taming the wildcats?

While the official railway and postal strikes continued during August, in the context of ever rising inflation, a number of "wildcat" strikes broke out at Amazon warehouses. Workers at Tilbury stopped work on 3 August, in protest against a 35p/hr (!!) pay rise. The strike spread quickly to other Amazon warehouses over the next two weeks, including Coventry, Doncaster, Staffordshire and Bristol, involving more than 1,500 workers. Other wildcat strikes took place at multiple oil refineries and

power plants from Southampton to Scotland, and in a food processing plant in Bury.

While these strikers have gone back to work for the moment, the issues of pay and working conditions have still not been solved. In the meantime the GMB union has been signing up many new members at Amazon, with the promise that this will allow them to stage a "legal" strike. Union bureaucrats no doubt hope to use the growing strike movement to rebuild their memberships and are

• 156,000 workers on strike together, all-out, would change everything

As many as 40,000 BT workers (including engineers and call centre workers) went on strike for the first time in 35 years, on 29 July, and 3 more strike days followed. They are fighting for an above-inflation pay rise and against attacks on jobs. Openreach engineers have had their local depots closed and have been told that if they want to keep their jobs, they will have to work out of new hubs, sometimes 200 miles away!

Striking officially for the first time since 2009,

115,000 postal workers at Royal Mail continue to strike a day or two at a time. At the time of writing, 2 more days have been announced for 30 September and 1 October. Workers were offered a 2% rise "unconditionally" which has subsequently been imposed and an additional 3.5% (still a real pay cut of 7% compared to current RPI of 12.3%) but only if they agree to radical changes to their conditions - referred to by their bosses as "modernisation"! This would mean taking away drivers' allowances

and allowances for weekend work, changing the sick pay policy, annualised hours, compulsory Sundays, full flexibility, etc., etc.! The fight continues, as it must!

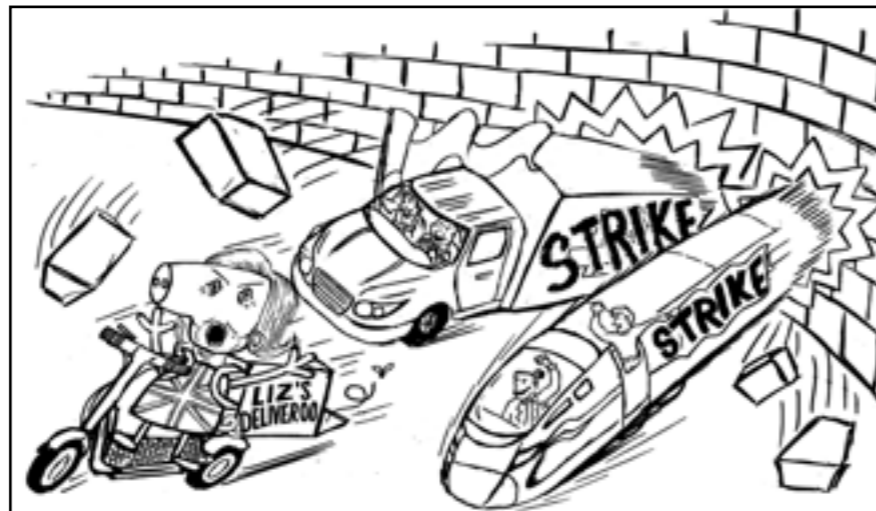
One has to ask however, why all sections of workers who are part of the Communication Workers' Union - and in fact 1,500 Crown Post Office workers in the CWU are also striking - are not striking together? Why is the co-ordination of strikes anathema to the union leaders? Are they afraid to win? Or afraid of losing control?

• Railways: a collective fight is what's needed

Over the past 3 months, a strike "movement" has been building up on the railways, involving Network Rail and most Train Operating Company workers. The issues are twofold - the slashing of jobs in NR and, of course, pay: there has been a 3-year pay freeze. So already in June, members of the RMT union began taking strike action and this has continued through the summer. But the strikes have been called one or two days at a time - and they total just 6 days across 3 whole months.

After the RMT's strikes had already started, the train drivers' union ASLEF, whose belated ballot for strike was supported by 90% of members, also went on strike for 2 (different!) days. However this strategy, which makes no sense to anyone but the union bureaucrats, may be changing, thanks to "pressure from below"... In a surprise turn-up for the books, a joint RMT-ASLEF strike was scheduled for 15 September, and this is unprecedented! So, despite the suspensions due to the queen's death, it is still possible that the strikes might "join up" in the future...

The union leaders have described the strike action as a "marathon" rather than a "sprint". It



seems the bosses' and government's strategy is to hold out in the hope that the workers will get disheartened. But in fact the RMT's Mick Lynch, now a celebrity thanks to the fact that he gets the better of journalists, and Mick Whelan of ASLEF, could choose to turn the

strikes into a sprint to the finish line, if they wished to. By co-ordinating, from now on, all rail workers' action and staying out until the demands are won. Of course if the leaders aren't up for it, the strikers could always start to co-ordinate themselves...

• Felixstowe docks strike: a long time coming!

Felixstowe dock workers went on an 8-day strike from Sunday 28 August to Monday 1 September. This shut down Britain's largest container port (it handles 48% of all traffic). Though workers returned to work after this, at the time of writing, they have not voted on the port's (revised up from 5%) 7% pay offer plus a one off payment of £500, nor are they ruling out further strikes.

Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company is owned by CK Hutchison Holdings, the world's largest port operator, which is registered in Hong Kong and based in the British Virgin

Islands tax haven! Unite the union claims that the port has made £250m in profits over the last two years, a figure Hutchison states is actually £98m... but even that is a hefty amount; in 2017 it paid out £198m in dividends!

There hasn't been a proper strike on the docks since 1995, when Liverpool dockers took action against the sacking of 80 workers by Torside, a subcontractor of Mersey Docks (MDHC) after they had walked out after being paid short for overtime. Days later, Mersey Docks sacked 300 workers (out of a workforce of 380) who refused to cross the Torside picket

line. But Unite's predecessor, the TGWU, never dared declare the strike official, nor did it make any move to extend it. MDHC refused to reinstate the strikers, who after more than two years of protracted campaigning, voted to accept a union-brokered settlement, in January 1998.

The Felixstowe strike, unlike the historical Merseyside strike, is official. And while it is under Unite leaders' control - which may ultimately mean a disappointing compromise - its lively militancy and duration have surprised everyone! We hope they win!

Labour admits it's not-so Labour

After Starmer's sacking of Sam Tarry, Labour MP for Ilford South and shadow transport minister after he turned up at an ASLEF picket line, a few Labour MPs have made a point of visiting strikes. But official Labour Party policy is to show that it's a responsible party fit to govern in the interests of business. So of course, its MPs need to give pickets a wide berth! The Labour shadow minister for business put

it this way, "You've got to be pro-business if you want to be pro-worker". This is nothing new. In a 2019 speech even the supposedly "red" Jeremy Corbyn explained: "It's sometimes claimed that I'm anti-business. That is complete nonsense".

In fact back in the 1970s, waves of wildcat strikes broke out against the then-Labour government, precisely because union leaders refused to organise strikes

• Petitions and protests don't change society

Over the summer, a number of campaigns were launched which are meant to offer solutions to people facing rising energy and other costs, while real wages are falling.

The "Don't Pay" campaign was founded just before the TUC "We Demand Better" demonstration on 18 June, by a group of people who have decided to remain anonymous. The idea is for at least 1 million people to refuse to pay their energy bills, with their website referring to the 17m people who refused to pay the Poll Tax. As of 6 September, just over 157,000 people had signed up. Possibly this campaign will fizzle out now that Truss has intervened - except that the £2,500 limit on bills is still too high.

"Enough is Enough" (EiE) was launched on 8 August, with 75,000 people signing up on the first day. As of 1 September, it had about half a million sign-ups. The campaign has 5 demands: capping energy bills at £1,277 (the March 2022 level), pay rises in line with inflation, ending of food poverty, decent homes for all and "tax the rich".

Mick Lynch, who is heavily involved in

the campaign (even though the RMT union he leads is not officially part of it), says that it's about "teaching people what it means to be an organised worker"...

EiE is calling a "National Day of Action" on 1 October (a Saturday). In this way, union leaders like him and Dave Ward whose name and CWU union is officially attached to the



• Binning the bosses' attacks

As Edinburgh and other Scottish refuse workers went on strike for 12 days in August, the press made an unusually big fuss about it, because the strike took place during the Edinburgh Fringe festival. The GMB, Unite and Unison unions rejected a 5% pay offer from Scottish local government organisation COSLA; and had planned further strikes in September. The refuse workers were to be joined by school and nursery staff.

However, after the personal intervention of First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, the strikes have been called off. The new "tiered" offer means a potential 10% pay "rise" for the worst paid, but as little as 4% for the better-paid. It's still a real-terms pay cut, but Sturgeon has convinced union leaders that there is no more money available. Scotland, however, is part of the very wealthy United Kingdom, where billions can be found at the drop of the hat to

against "their" government.

One wonders how former Public Prosecutor Keir Starmer would treat the demands of the barristers who began an all-out strike at the end of August, let alone the RPI +5% pay demand of NHS nurses, whose pay and conditions have been allowed to hit the floor, despite the praise showered on them by politicians on both sides of the House. □

campaign, say they - "the trade unions" - are thus taking the lead in the "people's" fight against the cost of living crisis. Which is all well and good, but the potential weapon of a general strike by the working class - which is the only effective way to fight the crisis, and which isn't so far out of reach right now, is not something they want to discuss!

Schools: undressing the system's hypocrisy

More and more working class families are resorting to second hand clothes shops or charities to obtain school uniforms - and no wonder. Average prices of original secondary school uniforms range from £200 to £337 - and just a little less for primary school children. It's true that in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, uniform grants are available, however

they usually cover just half of the cost. In England, where it's up to the local authorities to give any help, only 20% of them actually offer it. And when locally-funded secondary schools become state-funded academies, there's usually an increase in the cost of uniforms. One has to ask why on earth kids need to wear school uniforms in the first place, if few can afford them?

In fact the wearing of school uniforms is defended on the grounds that they hide

"social inequalities" between the pupils. But it is a profitable business which these pretend-egalitarians are really defending. Inequalities don't just "disappear" by dressing students in the same way. It's noticeable beyond their clothes: who are the children attending school with a full stomach and who are those with an empty one? It's the class system, after all, which imposes these inequalities in the classroom. And it has to go.

Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)

When is our cleaners strike?

Finally, the Communication Workers Union announced that cleaners and engineers (part of the so-called Royal Mail Property and Facility Solutions) will be balloted for strike action. This is a ballot we have been waiting for, for a very long time!

Back in March, we were promised the Living Wage Foundation rate of £11.05/hr for London and £9.90/hr outside London. But those rates were set in November 2021, before inflation sky-rocketed! And to add insult to injury, management in London has incorporated the London

Weighting Allowance into our basic pay, pretending it represents a pay increase. But of course it does not!

This fight is not only about pay. Our working conditions have also deteriorated: management hasn't recruited in sufficient numbers for years, but still tries to increase the number of duties allocated to each one of us. And we don't even have a union rep in-house! These are more strike demands to add to our list!

The ballot results will only be available on 27 September - more than a



month after our workmates in the postal services have had their first strike day. We can't understand why union officials didn't include us in the first days of strikes. We can only hope that when we are finally out, it will be with our fellow postal workers and others! Quite obviously, it's by striking together that we are the strongest! ☐

mind one bit delaying them before they get into work and explaining everything, and encouraging them to join the union.

- **Now you see us...**

Us agency workers who did make it into work during the strike didn't exactly find management grateful - far from it! Especially on the Parcel Sorting Machine, where a few (not enough!) workers were covering, the manager gave us an earful, trying to make us do the impossible! Certainly makes us think twice about coming in for the strike days this week.

- **Surprise, surprise...**

Oh dear, the Parcel Sorting Machine is now showing it's real face. On a lucky day, it spits out ~25% rejects on tracked and ~15% on 2nd Class. And we don't even know how many tracked parcels are missed, which will probably make some customers very happy... Managers said they need 10 of us at the machine? It'll be more like 15 - without counting the engineers needed! [Workers' fight bulletin Mount Pleasant Mail Centre, 06/09/22]



knows, with more of us there, we might even be able to start to take charge of co-ordinating a collective fight! ☐

not on strike!

In fact cleaners working for Atalian and Mitie on King's Cross station have been waiting since June for a promised strike ballot. Everyone is asking why they're not fighting altogether already - and more importantly why not alongside the train company workers on their strike days?

responsibility of manning (or womanning!) it all day! So as many of us as possible should be there - there's plenty of space for all of us to bring camping chairs and tables, set them up and have a rota for round the clock picnics. PS: The legal restriction of 6 applies only to the front door, the back door and the side door, after all!

- **Hard and fast**

If we went in hard and fast and said we're going on strike until they take their hands off our conditions and give us the pay rise we need, then there wouldn't be a need to notify of each new strike day 2 weeks in advance. The way it's being done at the moment, means the strike could possibly drag on for months. Surely not a good strategy...

- **Delaying tactics**

We found out that some agency workers were not told at all about the strike... So they were turning up for work a bit bemused at what we were all doing outside! We don't

on separate days, with no attempt made by the leaders of the union to join their demands to those of the main section of strikers, from the TOCs and NR. And now, they're supposed to have their own, separate, "cleaners' campaign"!

We all know it could be different! When we come to the strike gatherings (not really pickets!) everyone is upbeat and morale is high! And strikers and those not on strike can discuss together. That could be the beginning of organising - not just for pickets on the day - but for planning our next steps, and who

companies, no coordinated strike over pay has been announced. However, on their own, King's Cross and St Pancras Churchill cleaners had been taking strike action for 22 days in total over the course of 3 months up to the 16th July, which was the last day they went out. But Churchill workers from other stations, although subject to the same appalling conditions, were

- **We need to cut their crap!**

Obviously RM bosses just don't get how angry they've made us. Not only because of the 8%+ (and rising) pay cut, after they imposed a 2% "rise", but because they've put forward de facto pay cuts; yes they want to get rid of all the conditions which still remain after all their previous rounds of butchery. To coin a phrase: enough is enough!

- **Rare sighting**

So our strike stays solid! And despite the fact that management is trying to keep things going with agency workers, they're not really getting anywhere. In fact the odd manager has even popped down to the picket line to lend us support. And no wonder. Many management heads - and conditions - have been and will be chopped.

- **Picket picnics**

And talking of the picket line, we cannot leave it to the union reps to take the

King's Cross railway station (London)

Our fight continues

By the 17 September RMT members would have taken an 8th day of strike action - and on the 15th, it would have been alongside ASLEF drivers, for the very first time! But now we have to wait for new strike dates.

Anyway, we're still waiting for our subcontracted workmates, many of them with us in the RMT, to walk out with us! Gate Gourmet and the station and train cleaners have among the worst conditions and pay in London. And yet some, like Churchill cleaners, have been left to struggle alone, in separate disputes and

- **Bosses fear our unity, not dirty trains**

RMT's banner "pay justice for cleaners" demands £15p/hr, sick pay and travel allowances and has the names of Atalian, Mitie, Interserve and Churchill written on it, supposedly all part of the same campaign.

At the time of writing, although a simultaneous ballot is proposed for cleaners working across the railway network for these

BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)

BMW's production mayhem? Not at our expense!

After the summer shutdown there have been a succession of breakdowns and stoppages, again due to parts shortage. It means we get laid off; many of us without pay. Indeed, whether it's the war in Ukraine, the bottle-neck in demand for semiconductors, the Brexit border checks, or BMW's preparations for new electric models, the company makes us pay for their "loss".

In June-July, BMW tried to give us some notice of coming problems by indicating the precise amount of parts arriving per lorry and therefore the corresponding days of actual work this would amount to...! But now mates are

being sent home in the middle of a shift.

Since BMW doesn't pay for lay-offs, we (also Staffline temps) are "loaned" money and must pay it back through a monthly wage deduction. By now, the majority of us owe as much as £3,400-5,100 (1.3 to 2 months pay!). It's the same but worse for logistics workers at R&H. Our loan is deducted over a 3-month term. So if we took a loan for the summer shutdown for £900, £300 will be deducted from our pay over the next 3 months. As for R&H agency workers (from PMP, Planet Recruit, Selective, New Recruits, etc.) they're left unpaid. They rely entirely on overtime or hope



to be sent to another workplace during lay offs. Given the soaring cost of living this system just cannot continue. It's high time we had a strike here across the WHOLE plant - all contractors and agencies included. And the first demand has to be for lay-off pay for all! ☐

- **Bare minimum**

We hear the PJC rejected BMW's attempts to renegotiate the pay deal, and so we'll get a pay rise of RPI inflation in April. This is still just the minimum we need, as an inflation-matching pay rise isn't actually a "rise" - it's just keeping our wages where they are, which isn't enough.

- **The union is us**

But what did the discussion between BMW and the union officials involve? The officials have agreed to pretty much everything the company wanted - the 60/40 pay split for lay-offs being just the most recent example. So what will be

the catch for the RPI pay rise? BMW will want to make their money back, that's for sure... We can start preparing ourselves now to stop them!

- **The mayhem continues**

Even after a scheduled 3-week shutdown, BMW managers still didn't know if they were coming or going. And they couldn't tell us either! Within days of coming back, we were sent home 3 hours early after the assembly line ran out of parts. So all BMW's logistics planning comes down to "wait and see"!

- **Pay lay-offs and days off!**

As for agency workers at R&H, as usual we

were not paid when we were sent home due to parts shortages! For us it seems that the 24h notice clause doesn't apply... Even more reason for us - and everybody in this plant - to get lay-off pay! PS: This bank holiday we were not paid either! And if our rest day isn't Monday, that's yet one more day without pay.

- **We could keep it like this**

As a result of the part shortages the line has been going a bit slower than usual, giving us a chance to breathe. We could get used to this! How about it staying that way? [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini plant Oxford 30/08/22]

Ford Dagenham Engine Plant

- **Pay cut? no way!**

Apparently we're meant to be waiting to hear about a revision to the pay rise we were due this November, as AGREED (signed and sealed!) last year, for year 2 of the 2-year deal.

But since when did the NJNC/JWC have a mandate from us workers to even discuss this with the bosses? If Ford undertook to pay us the rate of inflation, we expect no less than that! Fiddling with an agreed pay deal, so Ford can benefit at such a (hard!) time as this, at our expense? No way!

- **Nothing but inflation plus!**

JLR bosses tried it. They wanted to renegotiate a 6% pay rise instead of the initial 12.2% agreed - but the workforce refused. Since inflation keeps rising (the RPI is expected to reach +18% this winter) we - on our side - may well want to renegotiate the pay deal - but only to increase the sum!

PS: LLL mates need an increase; we only got a pitiful 5.5% last December... We could kill two birds with one stone by fighting alongside Ford direct mates, while demanding the pay parity we need - and to be taken back in-house.

- **Ford needs overlaps, we don't**

On Lion Machining we'd barely come back from shutdown than bosses were already asking us to do overlaps... What's this about? Does Ford bet on us being short of money? We're much more short of holidays: 3 weeks was not enough.

- **The green green farce**

Yes it's all go-go-go on Lion Assy. Tigers are losing their stripes as they remain here in the Den. We hear the Saturday OT was laid on because they were too "green" to do the job properly. Or just too smart?

- **No monetary enhancement?**

It won't be much longer before TOPs workers get VR offers by post... We hear HR's sending them to all of us, hoping they'll get 50+ volunteers. And BTW, Ford describes getting an "unreduced" full pension (your own money) as an "enhancement"! Indeed, there's no incentive at all to leave on VR, except that we're too fed up to stay.

- **Letting 1st and 2nd tier go...**

While it's still not clear how many DEP/DDC workmates might apply for vacant TOPs jobs, given they might require HGV licenses, training etc., DEP bosses are



banking on it being quite a few... Yes, the fewer who remain under the old Blue Book Ts&Cs the better, apparently...

- **...And taking 3rd tier on?!**

Rumour has it that DEP bosses are already preparing to bring in at least 120 temps on 23-month contracts, to start as soon as VRs are allocated! It's a "redundancy situation" (60) - but they're taking on temps at the same time? Since when was that "legal"? Or is that a stupid question?

- **All out**

Back from summer shutdown and nothing's changed at Lineside. New recruits are still on 3-month rolling contracts (the not-so-new have been rolling for years!), there's still no occupational sick pay, and LLL expects each of us to carry on doing 2-3 workers' jobs. So time for us to make change happen - and join the strike wave? [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 31/08/22]

India

To "celebrate" 75 years of Indian independence Prime Minister Modi launched a demagogic campaign whereby every household had to fly the Indian tricolour. An unprecedented number of Indian flags were manufactured as the usual rules for their reproduction were temporarily suspended. Billions of them were hoisted everywhere, but many saw this as a nauseating mark of servility to Modi's reactionary government.

On the same day, Modi was busy setting more sinister precedents. His "justice" department offered remission to 11 men, convicted of gang-raping Bilkis Bano and murdering 14 members of her family in the aftermath of the Gujarat riots in 2002 - the most gruesome anti-Muslim pogroms since 1947. These men were allowed to walk freely back to their village, where Bilkis Bano still resides, terrorizing her and the local Muslim population.

So it's worth remembering what is being celebrated: the partition of

75 years after partition: the bloody past and bloody present

the Indian subcontinent into India and Pakistan on the eve of independence in 1947, dividing the population according to their religion, displaced some 15 million people and unleashed sectarian bloodshed that killed nearly two million. This has shaped the subcontinent's social fabric - and all according to a "solution" invented in Britain's colonial office, which broke up what would have otherwise been the world's largest country, bordering on Russia and China, which both happened to be out of imperialism's sphere of influence...

In the first decades of independence, Prime Minister Nehru, who had de facto accepted the consequences of this social division, fed the illusion that the bloody past of partition could be forgotten. But more bloodshed came in 1971, when an Indo-Pakistan war finally settled the (inevitable) 25-year contestation of so-called "east" Pakistan, with the formation of an independent (Muslim) Bangladesh. As the promises and new hopes of the

first decades gave way to disillusionment and crisis, it was the forces of Hindu nationalism which slowly but surely grew out of the deep wounds of British-induced religious warfare.

The story of Indian independence is a story of how ruthlessly and with what contempt for the lives of millions, British imperialism and the subcontinent's ruling classes managed to transfer power for their own benefit. But what is also part of this story is how on the eve of partition, the working class, bound together by its common class interest against capital, regardless of religion or caste, staged the largest number of strikes ever yet seen.

Today workers are beginning to move again and are protesting against the crisis. This provides hope for a future beyond the vile communal hatred promoted by Modi and his paramilitary gangster forces. And who knows, a future reunification of the populations of this currently blighted region? ☐

Bangladesh

Strikes and demonstrations have erupted in Bangladesh over the last 3 months. Thousands of garment workers from companies such as Brooklyn Cloth and Piazza Italia, took 4 days of wildcat action in June, demanding a 100% pay rise. Their paltry monthly salaries are equivalent to just £73.

In August, over 150,000 workers across 167 tea plantations owned by James Finlay, part of the British/Hong Kong based Swire conglomerate, the British-owned Duncan Brothers and MM Ispahani based in Dhaka and Khulna, went on a 14-day strike demanding a 150% pay increase, equal to the minimum wage of 300 taka per day (£2.74!). While living as dependent semi-slaves, they're paid just from £1.10/day.

They went back on strike after refusing their ruling-party-linked union leaders' agreement to accept an increase to 170 taka.

In recent weeks, motorcyclists and transport workers have blocked highways. The underlying reason is huge hikes in the price of food and fuel: rice increased 22%, onions by 43%, diesel and kerosene by 42% and petrol 52%. Some days, homes have no electricity for between 6-13 hours...

Indeed, Bangladesh is spiralling into a debt crisis. With debt of £54bn, last year its foreign reserves fell by £5.2bn as global commodity prices rose and Bangladeshi workers lost their jobs

An escalating social crisis?

overseas. This hasn't stopped Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina building a new £121m cricket stadium bearing her name, or the arguably more necessary Rooppur nuclear power plant and £3.3bn Padma Bridge. Except these latter are subject to large-scale corruption, helping to increase the current account deficit by 7 times. And Hasina's ruling Awami Party (People's Party) is squeezing the population to pay the deficit.

The government has asked the

IMF for further loans, but they come with conditions requiring cuts in state expenditure which would impose even more hardship on the population.

The debt crises now brewing across the whole region are only the latest stage in the chain of disasters originally generated by the 2008 economic crisis and now hugely exacerbated by the crises which have followed. Within the capitalist system, there is no escaping from them. ☐



In addition to this paper, we publish bulletins in several large workplaces in the South East, a journal, "Class Struggle" and a series of pamphlets on topical issues. If you wish to know more, contact Workers' Fight by e-mail, at contact@w-fight.org, or by postal mail at:

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